

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - December 17, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Ismael Higuera-Guerrero and his brother, Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero were sentenced in federal court in San Diego by United States District Judge Larry A. Burns based on their guilty pleas to federal racketeering charges arising from their participation in the Arellano-Felix Drug Trafficking Organization (AFO). Today, Judge Burns sentenced Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero to serve 30 years in custody and to forfeit \$1,000,000 . On December 3, 2007, Judge Burns sentenced Ismael Higuera-Guerrero to serve 40 years in custody and to forfeit \$5,000,000 .

In connection with his plea on March 16, 2007, Ismael Higuera-Guerrero admitted that from about 1988 to his arrest in May 2000, he was the AFO's top lieutenant, acting at the direction of the AFO's principal leaders, the Arellano-Felix Brothers. As admitted in his plea, Ismael Higuera-Guerrero supervised other upper-echelon AFO lieutenants, including his brother, Gilberto, and oversaw the AFO's day-to-day operations. Ismael Higuera-Guerrero admitted that those operations included receiving multi-ton shipments of cocaine and marijuana in Mexico, transporting those drugs to the Tijuana/Mexicali area, and shipping those

drugs across the border into the United States. Ismael Higuera-Guerrero also admitted supervising the collection of millions of dollars in drug proceeds in the U.S., the transportation of those proceeds back to Mexico, and the transmittal of payments to Colombian sources of supply. Higuera-Guerrero further admitted arranging for the regular payment of bribes to corrupt government and law enforcement officials and overseeing the AFO's "policing" of the Tijuana and Mexicali "plazas," which included the kidnaping, torture, and murder of AFO "enemies." These enemies included rival traffickers, uncooperative government and law enforcement officials, and AFO members suspected of betraying the cartel in one form or another, including cooperation with law enforcement.

On April 27, 2007, Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero pled guilty to a two-count Superseding Information charging him with a Racketeering offense and with the Commission of a Violent Act in Aid of Racketeering -- both charges relating to his role in the AFO. In connection with his plea, Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero admitted that he was an AFO lieutenant and that he worked closely with Manuel Aguirre-Galindo, on behalf of the Arellano-Felix brothers, coordinating the receipt of multi-ton cocaine shipments in Mexico, and the importation of that cocaine into the United States. Gilberto, like Ismael, also admitted to involvement in the collection of AFO drug trafficking proceeds, and the "policing" of the Tijuana/Mexicali "plazas," including the kidnaping and murder of AFO "enemies."

In December 2003, a seventh Superseding Indictment was filed in the Southern District of California charging 11 individuals, including both Ismael and Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero, with racketeering, drug trafficking, and money laundering offenses. The 11 defendants allegedly constituted the AFO's top hierarchy. On January 19, 2007, the Higuera-Guerrero brothers were among two of 15 major drug defendants and other criminals extradited to the United States from Mexico. The Higuera-Guerrero brothers were extradited to face the charges in the seventh Superseding Indictment.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, "Over the past decade, one by one, the members of the Arellano-Felix Organization have been brought to justice and punished for their crimes. The lengthy sentences imposed against the Higuera-Guerrero brothers demonstrate that we are committed to finishing the job, so that this international narco-trafficking organization shall never again operate with impunity."

“Today’s sentencing clearly shows that DEA along with our law enforcement partners are committed to apprehending and bringing to justice upper echelon members of the AFO drug trafficking organization,” said Ralph Partridge, DEA Special Agent in Charge, San Diego Field Division.

“The sentences clearly show that high-profile drug organizations who use vicious, violent and sometimes unimaginable means to protect and promote their illegal operations are not above the law,” said Special Agent in Charge Debra D. King, Los Angeles Field Office. “The financial investigation in cases involving major drug traffickers is the critical component to dismantling the economic backbone of these harmful organizations. IRS-Criminal Investigation is committed to working together with our law enforcement partners here in the U.S. and in Mexico to combat global drug trafficking.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Keith Slotter commented, “These sentences are an example of the FBI and our law enforcement partners fulfilling our commitment to investigate and subsequently charge those who are members of any violent criminal organization. We remain dedicated to protecting the public and will continue our efforts at effectively disrupting organizations who undermine the safety of our citizenry.”

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 06cr2646-LAB

Ismael Higuera-Guerrero

Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero

SUMMARY OF CHARGES TO WHICH ISMAEL HIGUERA-GUERRERO PLED GUILTY

Count 1 of the 7th Superseding Indictment - Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(c) –
Conducting the Affairs of an Enterprise Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

Count 2 of the 7th Superseding Indictment - Title 18, United States Code, Section (1962)(d) –
Conspiracy to Conduct the Affairs of an Enterprise Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

SUMMARY OF CHARGES TO WHICH GILBERTO HIGUERA-GUERRERO PLED GUILTY

Count 1 of a Superseding Information - Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(c) –
Conducting the Affairs of an Enterprise Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

Count 2 of the Superseding Information - Title 18, United States Code, Section 1959(a)(5)
Violent Act in Aid of Racketeering Enterprise

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Drug Enforcement Administration
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation
Federal Bureau of Investigation
California Department of Justice
United States Marshal's Service